

6-1

Man And The World

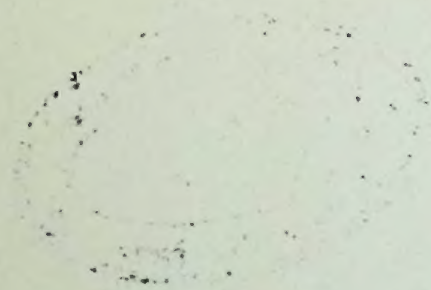
The Third S. N. Bhaduri Memorial Lecture
Delivered by Swami Veditatmananda
Adhyatma Vidyamandir, Ahmedabad

5581

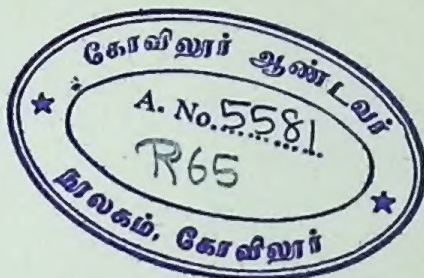
R65

ATIRA

S. N. BHADURI MEMORIAL FUND



Man And The World



The Third S. N. Bhaduri Memorial Lecture
Delivered by Swami Veditatmananda
Adhyatma Vidyamandir, Ahmedabad
on
January 2, 1984

S. N. BHADURI MEMORIAL FUND

Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association
P. O. Polytechnic, Ahmedabad 380 015, India

Published by R. C. Vora on behalf of Ahmedabad Textile
Industry's Research Association, Ahmedabad 380 015 and
printed by B. K. Thakore at Creative Printers Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad.

INTRODUCTION OF SWAMI VIDITATMANANDA

by

Dr. T. Radhakrishnan
Director, ATIRA



This is the third Memorial Lecture for Satyendra Nath Bhaduri. Through an unique combination of the qualities of head and heart, Bhaduri had become a living legend to all of us during his lifetime. Even though six years have passed since Bhaduri left us, the legend is fresh in our minds. Today, when we have gathered to honour the memory of Bhaduri, I consider that we are extremely fortunate in having Swami Viditatmananda to speak to us. Let me try and tell you why.

Most of us are interested in obtaining success and happiness through material pursuits. In order to be happy and successful, it is very important to get a deeper insight into the inner workings of one's own personality and also into the fundamental nature of order in this world. Through such deep insights, one becomes better equipped to relate harmoniously with the world and to attain the limits of one's own potential.

The Swamiji strives with devotion to implement this Truth and desires to share his experience with others. It is in pursuit of this mission that the Swamiji has accepted the request to talk to us today. I shall now give you very briefly his biodata.

The Swamiji graduated in Mechanical Engineering from Bombay University and after post-graduate studies in the U.S.A. he worked in that country on the design and construction of process plants. While in the U.S.A., he was inspired by Swami Chinamayananda to switch over his entire interest to a different kind of engineering, which one may call "Engineering of the Self". He became a student of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. After completing his studies in the new subject, he has been engaged for the last five years in teaching Vedānta and moral and religious topics to a variety of audiences.

I would now respectfully request Swami Veditatmananda to deliver the Third Bhaduri Memorial Lecture.

MAN AND THE WORLD

(A condensation of the Third Bhaduri Memorial Lecture)
SWAMI VIDITATMANANDA

When we think of MAN, one aspect or characteristic of the human personality comes to our immediate notice, which distinguishes man from all other existence, be it animals, plants or other forms which interact with man. This is the gift of the discriminating intellect by virtue of which man is able to distinguish and to choose between the good and the bad, the right and the wrong; the desirable and the undesirable. It is only this wonderful and unique gift that has made possible the sum of human progress since the dawn of our history – all scientific discoveries, all material achievements, all spiritual insights. When my discriminating intellect enables me to evaluate what I am at this moment, I can set to myself the goal of being different or better. Thus I can reach new heights. With the help of this powerful tool, I can do whatever I want. This is a beautiful gift that man alone enjoys – the privilege of thinking, judging and choosing, so that man can plan, design and achieve his own goals. This is the freedom of the human being.

With this privilege comes the responsibility of exercising the right of choice properly. Animals, which do not have the choice, but live pre-programmed lives governed by their instincts, do not have this responsibility. A donkey, a cat or a buffalo feels no urge from within to be a better donkey, cat or buffalo. Since their instinctive behaviour is pre-programmed, it is predictable. Swami Dayanadji has remarked that a man can be quite sure of how his dog will greet him when he comes home from office, but can never be sure of the greeting from his wife! This is because only she and not the dog has the choice to be in a good mood or not in a good mood; to be presentable or not presentable. When driving on the

road, we can be reasonably sure of how a dog or a camel will behave, but we have to be more wary about another driver or pedestrian.

The diversity of human behaviour which is consequent on the right of choice is not difficult to understand because people are striving along different lines, in pursuit of different goals. But behind all this diversity underlies a common urge – the urge to improve and be better, an urge which animals do not possess. And herein lies man's unique responsibility to recognize that other human beings are animated by the same urge and to ensure that my pursuit of happiness through being better does not tamper with or hamper or hinder the pursuit of others. If I do not recognize this responsibility, I am abusing my freedom of choice. This is why human society must evolve a code of conduct which is binding on all human beings. Dogs, cats, buffalos, plants, other living things need no such code of conduct because they have no freedom to choose. They, therefore, live in harmony with the world around them. But we – we do have the freedom to follow this harmony or abuse this harmony.

How is harmony ensured? Through the consideration of the happiness of others, of their rights, their requirements. Who are these others – only the human beings immediately around us? By no means. There is a much larger sphere of interaction and responsibility, a universal scheme, in which I am not an isolated and independent entity, but an interdependent entity. The cup of tea that I took today links me not only to the one who made the tea and the other who served it, but to the shopkeeper who sold the tea, the distributor who sold it to him and back to the tea gardens of Assam or the Nilgiris. The water with which the tea was made did not come from the tap by accident, but was extracted from the earth and supplied through complex processes and interactions. The gas which boiled the water came from the refinery which cracked the petroleum which was again extracted from the earth. Thus a simple thing like my drinking a cup of tea has involved refine-

ries, waterworks, tea gardens and a legion of workers, shopkeepers and distributors. When, likewise, I consider my food, my clothes, my house and all the simple things that are required for my day-to-day living, I find that the whole world is functioning in order to provide me with what little I require – humans, animals, birds and the little things that scavenge my surroundings and keep them clean. The worms, the ants, the birds, the cats, the dogs, all contribute in some way or the other to my welfare. The entire plant kingdom contributes. This is the astounding sphere of interdependence within which I must exercise my freedom of choice. Is this all? No, the matter goes further.

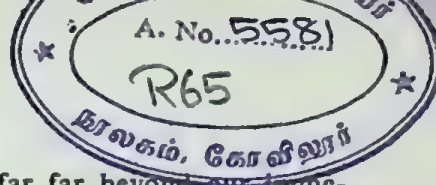
I possess a body which I owe to my parents, who in turn owed theirs to their parents and so on; so my body is the product of a whole ancestry. Totally innocent when born, I am today an engineer or a scientist, filled with knowledge, information, skills. My father, mother, teachers and so many others contributed to my learning. But where did my teachers get this knowledge except through the totally dedicated lives of Newton, Einstein and countless other great scientists? It is they who filled the granary of scientific knowledge from which I am simply consuming. The Rishis of yore formulated the principles of language and grammar, philosophy and much more. Through their effort I have a medium by which I can communicate with you. Further, my very existence is made possible through cosmic forces which ensure that food can be grown in the fields through the blessing of rain, which comes down because of the Sun and the Moon. I live in light, breathe air, drink water, eat food because of the workings of the entire Universe. The past and the present are constant contributors to what I am now. Therefore, my right of choice does not involve just the consideration of my immediate neighbours, but the interest and well-being of the whole of Creation. And this is how we thought of today's topic "Man and the World".

Man is, therefore, not an island, but just a link in the entire chain of creation. It is only occasionally that we notice some of the links.

When the bus which we take for granted does not arrive at all, we enquire about the reasons and discover that the bus did not come because there was no Diesel; because there was a work-to-rule in the refinery; because the Union leaders ordered a work-to-rule; because they were so advised from their headquarters in New Delhi. If we start working to rule, in a refinery, a bank, or a railway, all work stops! And so I could not attend my programme because I could not get a bus, because of somebody in Delhi!

Physicists tell us that all physical phenomena are interconnected through some forces. But our lives are influenced not only by such physical forces, but also by much deeper undercurrents, if I may say so; forces at the psychological, the spiritual and the cosmic level. Life is happy only when all these forces act not at random, or in opposition, but in harmony. There may be a hundred people in an orchestra playing very diverse instruments with very different sounds. But the conductor standing in front of them and making gestures which we do not quite understand, communicates with all the musicians and ensures that the sounds produce harmony and rhythm, even though no musician, no instrument, no sound is identical to another. All are equal in the orchestra, but equality does not have to mean sameness.

All living things and the inert world constitute the Universal Orchestra, with a universal score and rhythm. But only the humans in this orchestra have the choice to produce discord instead of harmony. All others are programmed to perform in harmony, through what we call the ecological balance. The instruments given to the human musicians are body, mind and intellect, all highly sophisticated. Each such instrument plays a tune all the time, the body through its actions, the mind through its emotions and the intellect through its ideations. Actions, emotions and ideas constitute the music of our lives. How does this harmonize and fit into the score of the Universal Orchestra? By our constant recollection that our actions may have, each not by itself measurable, but in the aggre-



gate, a long range consequence that goes far far beyond ~~our~~ immediate neighbours. In fact, wise men go so far as to say that the aggregate influence of our actions may even cause so-called natural calamities or natural blessings. We believe that our Lord is gracious. In a way we can take some credit for this grace of the Lord inasmuch as we as a society must have performed some positive actions in the direction of the universal harmony. If our actions are harmonious, grace flows to us; otherwise calamities.

The Bhagavad Gita points out that the bodies of all human beings are made out of the food they eat; all bodies are nothing but modifications created from food, which in turn grows because of the rains. But why are there rains? They come from 'Yajna', which to us means sacrifice. Sacrifices are not just the act of igniting a fire and putting something into it. What is offered is something which we deem valuable; an offering and a communication from the individual or a small group to the total, from men to the whole of cosmos. And it is said that it is from this spirit of offering and communication which underlies the sacrifice that the rain, which symbolises all favourable natural phenomena, comes. Such favours come to us from Nature through the submergence and dedication of the individual to the total. This is what the Bhagavad Gita points out as the Cosmic Harmony which permeates the entire cycle of creation. The Sun shines in our service, the rivers flow and sacrifice themselves into the sea in our service, the trees flower and serve us with fruit and the wind blows in order to give us air.

Modern physics searches for fundamental factors which bind everything, but the Bhagavad Gita has identified the fundamental factor as the spirit of Sacrifice. Sacrifice means service to all creation. Just as the hand rises by reflex action to protect the eye from injury and the stomach digests the food in order to distribute energy to the whole body, the Spirit of Sacrifice demands that we function in order to serve all others. This is the ultimate conclu-

sion to which we come when we exercise that discriminative intellect which has been given to us as a unique gift.

There may be an immediate objection from individuals. Will not those who sacrifice be exploited and become paupers? Yes, but not when all of Society, all nations, understand and keep in step with the rhythm of life. Again, as the Bhagavad Gīta points out, when you serve me and I serve you, each of us is both the server and the served.

What do I lose by not following the universal rhythm, the spirit of sacrifice? I go against my own nature, which makes me not just something in the Universe, but the Universe itself. The universal rhythm is, therefore, Man's truth, which makes Man truly happy only by sacrifice, by giving up, by renunciation, by what we call Sannyāsa. Sannyāsa means not merely wearing a certain cloth, but rather a state of mind in which one is imbued with the spirit of renunciation and sacrifice. In fact when I am happy, at that moment, I become a Sannyāsi. Giving is always easy and simple; giving alone relieves me from the tension and conflicts of acquiring and holding on. When you next feel happy, please analyse your feelings. You will find that you are unconnected, detached, not holding on, totally relaxed and free. The basic nature of the human being is 'Yajna' and it is only by following one's basic nature that one can feel happy. The feeling that you are obliging someone else through sacrifice is illusory. The truth is that you are obliging no one but yourself, by achieving inner harmony. When I serve others and others serve me, there is not only an external harmony in society, but a harmony within and this is the principle which is also called 'Ahimsā', or non-injury, yet another name for what the Bhagavad Gīta calls 'Yajna'. When the principle of Ahimsā is practised in such a way that all human beings pursue their own aspirations without trampling on the rights and requirements of others, there is total sacrifice in the whole of the society, which creates harmony within and without. This generates an influence which

attracts the whole Universe and all cosmic forces and phenomena to contribute to the prosperity of society. The secret of success and happiness is not accumulation or aggrandisement. The true measuring rod of happiness is freedom from possession.

If this principle is accepted by all, very few codes and rules and regulations of human conduct will be required because all will automatically achieve harmony through a spirit of dedication and sacrifice. Society will then be happy and joyful. Even if I as an individual follow the rule of harmony inside a society which has not accepted such a rule, I will still reap a benefit by achieving happiness through being true to my real nature. I will really discover the beauty of my life, as I will cease to look outside for objects to possess and aggrandize and turn my gaze inwards for discovering a self-sufficiency and a positive joy which would inspire me to give and serve.

MAJOR POINTS ARISING FROM QUESTION-ANSWER SESSION

Ahimsā Does Not Mean Absence of Injury

At every situation in life, we have to make a choice of one thing in preference to another; giving up of one interest in order to achieve another. In any such choice, Ahimsā would mean choosing that which serves the interest of a larger group of people. It may not always be easy to decide this choice and mistakes are likely to occur. But we learn from mistakes and improve our judgement.

In Creation, one or the other kind of Himsā is associated with every action and no action will be totally free from Himsā or injury. Our choice should be to minimise Himsā.

Ahimsā is not opposed to resistance to evil. That is how hurting a Goonda to protect one's wife and children or fighting against an enemy to protect the country is not considered to be Himsā. Ahimsā is not just avoiding a conflict – it is a positive action, where necessary, to assure peace.

Sannyāsa Means Freedom or Independence

A careful analysis of any experience of happiness reveals that one is happy when one is free from any attachment or the idea of possession. Although it appears as though happiness is supplied by an external object or an event, in fact the object or event happens to be instrumental in creating a mind that is free and unattached at the moment. Happiness, therefore, is in the mind rather than in an object or a situation and the Sannyāsi directly pursues this happiness.

Sannyāsa is, therefore, not so much in the robes as it is in the mind. Since happiness is really felt – by anyone – when the mind is

free, the life of a Sannyāsi naturally involves the renunciation of the pursuit of happiness which is secured from objects and events. He strives not to depend upon the objects or surroundings for his happiness and thus develops an independence or freedom from possessions and external situations. This ultimately culminates into the discovery of abundance in the absolute freedom that is the Self. The ochre robes are an indication to the Sannyāsi and to others also that he is in pursuit of knowledge and leads a life of renunciation.

The Spirit of Sacrifice is Not an Isolated Value

The spirit of sacrifice involves minimum expectation and maximum contribution. Our own needs must be minimised. And this happens as we discover the inner joy that is involved in the attitude of sacrifice and service. Life becomes simple and with minimum of possessions. This is called Aparigraha. Then there is no covetousness of what rightfully belongs to others. This results in non-stealing or Asteyam. Since I do not want what belongs to others and my own needs are minimum, there is no reason why I should hurt others or trample upon the rights and requirements of others. This is Ahimsā. This conviction would require that I should control my natural tendency to possess and to indulge and to acquire and achieve even at the cost of others. A life of such self-control is Brahmacharya. Then there is a harmony in my thought, word, and deed. This is Satyam.

A life of service and sacrifice will necessitate the invocation and practice of all these values. Each value helps the others and each is strengthened by the others. These values form the first step of the eight-fold Yoga or a life of conscious evolution propounded by sage Patanjali.

Mahatma Gandhi is a famous example in our own age of one who practised these five values together, leading to a life of great service, sacrifice, simplicity and contentment. However, the validity of these values is not restricted to individuals. They can also be

practised by the nations of the world, with the same societal result of happiness which individuals can attain in their personal lives.

Personal Responsibility Arising from Freedom and Power

Each one of us, in the attempt to improve one's own circumstances, demands something from the environment and thereby creates a set of circumstances in the environment, enveloping one. Our primary desire for understanding our needs and helping ourselves can generate a dialogue with the entire Universe. Our personal responsibility is to realise that our attempt to make our own lives beautiful truly succeeds only when we serve all others and help to make their lives beautiful. The drive and the guidance for this realisation must come from within. If individuals remould themselves according to this way of thinking, they exert a very strong positive influence towards moulding all society into the same way of thinking. Such ideas are contained in our Scriptures. If they are debated in groups like the present one, this effort will exert its own influence towards the betterment of society. Each individual has to discover the tremendous extent of his or her latent power for remoulding oneself and the society around. My strength is a blessing for others and my weakness makes me a parasite on them. This is a most natural idea, which appears unnatural only because we are living in a society which has turned its face away from the idea of service and sacrifice. Let each individual pursue his aspiration for service and sacrifice with the same intensity with which he aspires to become a scientist, a doctor or an engineer.

Purpose of This Talk

Living in modern times, individuals have naturally imbibed the contemporary values of material success and prosperity. The purpose of today's talk is to communicate, at least to some, that there are other and more enduring parameters of happiness, such as truthfulness, simplicity and giving. Each of us appreciates the value of these qualities when he finds them in others. It, therefore, stands

to reason that these same values of simplicity, Satyam and Ahimsā must be favourable to oneself. Such a code of conduct is nothing but commonsense. Departure from this code of values is usually caused by a feeling of helplessness. However, if a man sticks stoutly to these values, he will no more need other crutches and he will never be crushed. It is for each one of us to make this discovery.

The power of discrimination among a whole host of values and the freedom of choice are given to Man alone, because he alone has the potential to rise from the level of an animal to the level of a human being, and again from there to the level of God. The purpose of life is to achieve this ascent by self-unfoldment and not to regress to the animal level through the gross pursuit of the pleasures of the senses. God is not outside – God resides in each one of us. Let each one of us discover God within each one.

